

# THE REFORMER AND CHRISTIAN.

Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth.—*Jeremiah*, v. 1.

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## THE BINDINGS OF SATAN.

“And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying, that bonds and afflictions abide me.”—*Acts* xx. 22, 23.

The binding influence on Paul at this time, causing him to go to Jerusalem, was not from the Lord, but from satan, who is also called the strong man—because no human power can withstand his influence, or prevent the accomplishment of what is designed when satan is thus permitted to bind men; that is, to the extent and in the way permission is granted unto him to bind, afflict, or buffet them; as in the case of Job, Saul, Paul, and others.—The reasons why satan is permitted to do these things, are various, some of which may hereafter be stated, while there are others locked up in the counsels of God, and wholly beyond the scrutiny of man. Such bindings of satan, however, always bring persons into great trials and sufferings; but if they are faithful under them, they will come out from them more purified, favoured, and blessed than before. Paul himself gave some over unto satan, in a way greatly to afflict and distress them, for the benefit likely to arise to the individuals from such afflictions, and even the apostle was not without his buffetings from satan for an equally beneficial purpose. These buffetings and bindings of satan, therefore, when the Lord gives satan power to exercise them, are not designed to cause people to sin, but rather to prevent sin—as in the case of Paul, to keep him from being *exalted above measure*. In other cases they are permitted, in order to

destroy sin, by making the individuals weary of it, in consequence of the sufferings it brings upon them.

Again, satan is sometimes permitted exceedingly to try men, as he did Job and Peter, that he may sift them as wheat, and bring to light every particle of chaff or dust which he believes can be found in them. And he well knows how to do this. In such trials, few will have any thing to boast of.—They are of a peculiar kind, and of such a nature as are most calculated to cause the individuals to do things quite of a reprehensible nature in the eyes of men, and which, in almost every case, are done to some extent. But what they do under these severe trials, that would, under other circumstances be very wrong, and without excuse, is in many instances, hardly accounted sin unto them by the Lord—because, at the time, they scarcely have power to avoid doing as they do, in consequence of the severity of the trial, and the influence which satan, with his power of darkness on the mind, is permitted to exercise towards, or over them. The degree of this power and influence, and the peculiarity of the trial throughout, man cannot know, and hence cannot make the proper allowance, and is generally too severe in his condemnation against the persons. But the Lord who knows all, makes a gracious and merciful allowance, as in the case of Job and Peter, and on repentance he readily pardons and forgives. Man, not being able to see as God sees in such cases, is often unmerciful and unforgiving, very much to his own hurt and condemnation in the sight of God.

These things should teach us cau-

tion how we act towards, and judge many persons on account of what they do under particular trials, contrary to the general tenor of their conduct, since it cannot be known to us whether the persons had power to avoid doing as they did; as they certainly have not in some cases under the peculiarity of their circumstances, and the degree of control the devil is permitted to exercise over them at the time. For even Job cursed the day he was born, under the pressure of his sufferings, and uttered and said things for which he abhorred himself, and repented in dust and ashes. And the confident and zealous Peter, when the trial came, denied his Lord, and cursed and swore, to escape from danger. And the firm and inflexible Paul, when led bound by satan to Jerusalem, went into the temple to deceive the Jews, and did that which was outwardly much worse in upholding Jewish customs, than what Peter had done, for which he so severely rebuked him.

There is also a *snare of the devil*, into which many are brought through a voluntary yielding to the counsel of the devil and to what is wrong, and which at first, they might have easily resisted. But not having done this, the devil has made his bands strong, and can afterwards "*take them captive at his will*," and lead them as he shall choose. See 2d Timothy, ii. 26.

Again, the devil has a just claim on some, to mete out a portion of suffering on them according to their demerits, and which he will inflict to the utmost extent, except the Lord rescue the poor victim from his grasp; and in some cases, such is the aggravated nature of persons offences, and their continuance in them, that the Lord leaves them in the hands of him *who has the power of death*. Christ alludes to such a case as this, in the following passage, Matthew, v. 25: "Agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the offi-

cer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt not come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing." This is a call on all to amend any faults they have committed, and by timely and true repentance, to turn from them, before the work of rigorous and righteous punishment begins. Now is the time for this whole nation to attend to this counsel, as the Lord is about to rise up and shut the door of invitation to return to him, and allow the officer of justice to begin to do his work. And, Oh! such a work as will be performed! The writer has too deep a sense of it resting on his mind, to withhold this admonition.

But to proceed to the subject which heads this article. It was probably the same spirit which bound Paul when he went up to Jerusalem, that *drove Christ into the wilderness*. (The Spirit of God does not commonly *drive* any one.) We are told, indeed, that "in all things it behoved him [Christ] to be made like unto his brethren [having taken on him the seed of Abraham,] that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God. For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them\* that are tempted." The apostle adds: "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." We are expressly told, that the devil took Christ up into a high mountain, and also brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on the pinnacle of the temple; and why should we not suppose it was the same power that *drove him into the wilderness*? It seems, indeed, that Christ was at this time under the management of the devil, and he plied his temptations in various ways, to gain some advantage over him, or cause him to swerve from the right course. But Christ suffered no harm in the whole of this work or trial of satan. Who, except Christ, can say they have thus stood, and have not



erred under the binding trials and temptations of satan? We have seen, that neither Job, Peter, nor Paul, did thus stand and endure trials. Each of them suffered some loss.

We may here state some of the probable reasons why satan is permitted to bind men. In the case of Paul, it may have been on account of the severe public rebuke he gave Peter for yielding to the Jewish prejudices when at Antioch. For it was certainly just with God to permit Paul to be put under a similar trial with that of Peter, to see whether he would acquit himself better under it than Peter did.—Peter had been put under a trial for his great confidence in himself, that he would stand by Christ come what would, even prison or death. And he never afterwards boasted of what he would do, nor could he be brought, after what then took place, to say he loved Christ more than the other disciples; as his words before seemed to imply, when he said, although all the others should forsake Christ, he would not.

What Paul did to Peter, from his own showing, seems a plain violation of what Christ had commanded, when he said; "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone." Peter was certainly a warm and devoted Christian brother to Paul; and yet says Paul, "I said unto Peter before them all." And what he said was of the most severe and pointed nature, deeply reflecting on his conduct as unbefitting a common honest man. By a train of reasoning, he in effect told him he was a sinner, and a transgressor,—and makes known, in his epistle, that "he was to be blamed," for allowing his fears of them of the circumcision so to govern his conduct as to practise deception, whereby other Jews were induced to dissemble likewise, and that even Barnabas also was carried away with the dissimulation. It does not appear that Peter made any reply to the high charges made against him, or attempted to justify his conduct, but bore

all with Christian meekness and submission, having been before instructed of his liability to err or come short of remaining firm in the time of trial.—And he afterwards speaks well of his "beloved brother Paul," and of what he had written, whereas Paul in his epistle, narrates this failing of Peter. Did Paul do right herein? And if he did not, and was too severe on a brother, was it inconsistent with the Lord's dealings with men, to permit him to be put to the trial, to prove to himself whether he would stand firm, and use no dissimulation to please the Jews or others under the trial?

There is another reason why satan might be justly permitted to use a binding influence in taking Paul to Jerusalem, arising from his not giving sufficient heed to what Christ had made known to him. If we may so express it, Paul had a hankering desire to go often to Jerusalem, and particularly on great occasions, without any apparent call or requirement ever to go there, except in a single instance. Then he *went up by revelation*, and it turned out happily and well, and caused the Gentile brethren to "rejoice for the consolation," of what had been done at the time of his then going there. At Ephesus once, we are told, "when they desired him to tarry longer time with them, he consented not; but bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this *feast* that cometh in Jerusalem." And again, we read; "For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia; for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost." On all these occasions, it does not appear he had any call to go to Jerusalem. We hear of no good that was done by his going there—nor do we see any thing for him to do there. Apostles were already there, and the people were not in need of instruction. Once when he went there, all we read is, that he "saluted the church, and then went down to Antioch." It seemed more like wast-

ing valuable time, than promoting any benefit. Many others, it appears, were too fond of being at Jerusalem, instead of going about preaching the word. "A great persecution against the church at Jerusalem" at one time, was made subservient to scattering many "abroad throughout the regions of Judea, Samaria, Phenice, Cyprus," &c. These, we are told, "went every where preaching the word, and the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned to the Lord." Had it not been for this persecution, it seems, these labours would not have been performed by their leaving Jerusalem—hence the persecution was overruled for good.

But that Paul permitted human partialities and feelings to draw him too frequently to Jerusalem, and especially on particular occasions and great days, is but too evident. By yielding to these, they became as a snare to him, and he was at length, by going there, brought into great trials, and suffered a two years imprisonment at Cesarea. His partiality in being at Jerusalem appears further from the great unwillingness he felt to leave there at all in the first instance. For when on his return to Jerusalem, about three years after his conversion, and while praying in the temple, and in a trance, Christ said unto him; "Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me." Paul began to reason with the Lord, as if he best knew what to do in the case, and assigned reasons why it would be very suitable for him to stay at Jerusalem to convince the Jews.—The reasons given were plausible enough, but were not to be put in competition with infinite and divine wisdom. They were at best only the exercise of human judgment, such as Samuel once exercised when he went to select one of Jesse's sons to be made king. The prophet on seeing the fine countenance and stately appearance of Eliab, said; "Surely the Lord's anointed is before him." It was told Samuel that "the

Lord seeth not as man seeth"—man being too much governed by outward appearances, and the prophet was no doubt satisfied that the Lord knew best who to select. Paul should have also known, that he was too shortsighted to give counsel to the Lord; and when it was told him, in reply to his reasonings—"Depart: for I will send thee far off to the Gentiles," he should never have forgotten the words. This indeed ought to have been sufficient to satisfy Paul of the line of his duty with respect to the place of his future labours, and to have kept him away from Jerusalem, unless especially required to go there; and, yet, as stated before, among all the times of his going there, it would appear he had never been required but on one occasion, and only that time, as far as we can see, was it of the least utility or benefit to himself or any body else.

It is probable, therefore, that an improper disregard to the Lord's command to him, by leaving his labours among the Gentiles where they were attended with so much success and so pressingly desired, and going so often to Jerusalem, in addition to his uncharitable rebuke of Peter, were the cause why satan was permitted to exercise the binding influence upon him he did, the last time he went there. (It is not likely he ever wished to go there again.) The binding influence appears to have been very strong, when he last went to Jerusalem, so that nothing could hinder him from going.

In speaking of this last journey to Jerusalem, by his historian, Luke, we are told, on coming to Tyre they found disciples, and tarried with them seven days: "who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem." Here was an express prohibition from the Lord, against his going to Jerusalem—and it is the only time we have any account that this apostle went in direct opposition to a requirement from the Spirit of God. On arriving at Cesarea, (where afterwards Paul lay in prison upwards of two



years,) they entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the seven deacons, who had four daughters, which did prophesy. Tarrying here some time, the consequences of Paul's going to Jerusalem were set before him by a prophet, known to be divinely inspired, because he had before foretold a great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Cæsar. (It was at this time contributions were sent to the poor saints at Jerusalem from their brethren among the Gentiles.) This prophet whose name was Agabus, on coming to Cesarea, to the house of Philip, took Paul's girdle, (without knowing perhaps to whom the girdle belonged,) and binding his own hands and feet, said, "Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles." All were convinced the prediction would be realized if he went to Jerusalem, and Luke, Philip, his daughters, and the other disciples at Cesarea, wept on account of what lay before him if he persisted in his purpose, and "besought him not to go up to Jerusalem." But the binding influence was too strong to be overcome or counteracted, and Paul answered; "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready, not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus." It was no doubt very painful to the apostle, to withstand the importunity of his friends, and go counter to their request—and it could be no less painful and trying to them, to see their advice and counsel disregarded by his persisting still to go to Jerusalem. But perceiving that all they could say would be unavailing, and, as it is expressed, that "he would not be persuaded," they "ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done."

Soon after Paul's arrival at Jerusalem, we read of his doing what, on the face of it, was much worse than that which Peter had done, for which Paul

had so openly and severely rebuked him. For after that rebuke of Peter, and after all he had said and written about the abrogation of the Jewish rites, customs, and observances, he consented to go into the temple with four others who had a vow on them, to purify himself with them, and be at charges with them, and spend seven days of his valuable time in accomplishing those outward, and now useless and abrogated customs of the law. All this was done too, to make the advocates for Jewish rites believe, that he held to the continuance of those rites, and *walked orderly and kept the law*, and that what they had heard of his speaking against the further use of the Jewish customs and observances, was not true, when, indeed, it was strictly true.\* What a want of firmness and his usual faithfulness was here! How consistently now might Peter return the reproof given to himself against his reprover. But here let it be observed—when a person means well in what he does, or by a train of circumstances is brought to do what he otherwise would not, and what is against the choice of his own mind, (as was no doubt the case both with Paul and Peter on these occasions,) severe and cutting rebuke is a much greater sin than the thing done, and will subject the one who uses it to the most severe punishment. God, who is infinite in knowledge, knew all the circumstances which led Paul to do what he did, and therefore could only rightly judge of the act; and we do not find that he ever reproved or censured him, for what he did, at this time. He was not even reminded of it in any way, because, no doubt his own mind was sufficiently sensible how he had failed. Herein, how much more mercifully the Lord dealt with him, than

\* Paul had charged Peter with not *walking uprightly*, or as the word means, not walking with a *straight step*—not maintaining a *firm footing*, according to the truth of the gospel: the very thing he himself neglects to do, on the present occasion, in a much greater degree.

he had dealt with Peter for a much inferior departure from the uprightness and truth of the gospel.

This going into the temple, however, to accomplish certain rites of the law, devised in the counsel and will of man, to effect an apparent benefit, and quiet all clamours, turned out just the reverse of what was intended and expected, and brought upon the apostle a train of sufferings and trials of the most severe and threatening kind, and of long continuance—all of which would have been avoided, (so far as we can perceive,) had Paul in accordance with his call, and Christ's words to him, continued his labours among the Gentiles and kept away from Jerusalem; or if, when there, he had *walked uprightly, according to the truth of the gospel*, and not consented to use such dissimulation as he rebuked in Peter. In the very work of attempting to conciliate the Jewish prejudices and please the Jews, by deceiving them, and while in the temple accomplishing the days of his purification, a great outcry, and a scene of commotion and violence of the most threatening character, were commenced against him; and nothing but the immediate interposition of the Lord's hand, prevented him from being killed. But the Lord did not intend he should be killed, and while threatened with dangers on every hand, and one night after a day of great tumult, and when the chief captain feared "lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces," the Lord stood by him, (not to upbraid him for what he had done—for he was suffering its consequences sufficiently—but to support him in this trying time,) and said; "Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome."—Here was a sure guarantee to Paul for his life, it was now safe, although the very next day, more than forty Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. Vain attempt and conspiracy! What

can man do against a promise of God? The imminent danger and peril however, which Paul appeared to be in, from this conspiracy of so many determined and revengeful Jews, induced the chief captain to call two centurions to furnish two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearmen, at the third hour of the night, and forward him on towards Cesarea.

And now to conclude. The Lord had said, when he called Paul as a vessel unto him, to bear his name among the Gentiles, "I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." He did suffer greatly, and there was a fitness that he should thus suffer more than others, because he had made others suffer. But God knows how to overrule all for good, both for the sufferer and others.—The example of Paul's sufferings, is calculated to support and encourage others under suffering, while they were beneficial to himself. For by his last sufferings at Jerusalem, he was cured of all partiality for going there again. He would make no more haste to go to Jerusalem, when among the Gentiles and entreated to stay. He was also taught by what took place when last there, that he too, as well as Peter, could conform to Jewish prejudices, and not "walk uprightly, according to the truth of the gospel"—and that none can justly boast over another, till his race is closed. He might also perceive it was not best to be severe in rebuking a brother, and especially in a public manner, for what he might do under certain circumstances, or severe trials. And to conclude with the admonition of this same apostle: "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall:" and fall too, like the apostle, into what he may at one time be severe on another for having done.

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THE BRIDLE—*Causing people to err.*

"And there shall be a bridle in the jaws of the people, causing them to err."—*Isa. xxx. 28.*

Mention was made in our last num-



ber of this bridle, causing people to err. As there stated, it is meted out to men in the reckoning or settlement which the Lord will make with every one, at the close of the present dispensation or order of things. Since it is in the counsel of God, and in the order of his Providence, therefore, that such an event should take place, we ought not to murmur or complain on account of his dealings towards us in this, any more than in other of his dealings towards men. To those who are truly upright and sincere, nothing that shall take place will turn to their injury or disadvantage, no matter what the events that shall take place may be, or however ruinous and destructive they may be in appearance. All shall be made to work together for their good, as certainly as that God lives to do good to those that put their trust in him and seek to do his will. The effects of some of their errors may be painful and trying to themselves in the extreme, but the exercises and trials they produce, will only serve more fully to purify them from whatever is wrong, while in the righteous retribution of God, and in his wisdom and goodness, those errors will so cause the wicked and insincere to stumble, as to keep them from approaching the Lord's altar to profane it, and to injure his cause and people. For the wicked, seeing the Lord's people make some errors, will glory over them, affect great regard to right conduct and consistency, as if they were much better than they are, will shun them, disregard all they say, and thus remain in their darkness and self-complacency to undergo ultimately great judgments and miseries.

Take notice, that this bridle causing people to err through delusion on the mind, is of such a nature that men cannot withstand its force, and hence the error in itself is not criminal. Things erroneous in themselves, will be made to appear so plainly as correct, that honest persons cannot fail to admit and speak of them as correct. And this

error into which men will be brought, will serve various important purposes, besides operating as a stumbling-block to the wicked. In the first place it will show that God is true, and that every man is a liar—and thus correct a very great evil now in the world in looking so much to man. For it is written; "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord." And again; "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of." In the second place, erring in respect to things of which men have been very confident, will tend to do away that overweening conceit which most persons have, and fondly cherish, that they never make mistakes or fall into errors. And, thirdly, it will test men's honesty, by manifesting whether they are willing to see their errors and mistakes, and have them spoken of as such by others.

The writer himself made some very great mistakes in the application of certain prophecies to events he believed would take place at a particular time, which have since proved to be mistakes, and therefore he knows the purposes which such a circumstance may subserve. The old man of our fallen nature requires to be pretty well dead, not to feel unpleasant to stand on record as a false prophet by such an occurrence. In cases of this kind, the whole rests upon this one point, (so far as God and ourselves are concerned, and which is the only thing of any consequence to us,) were we honest and sincere in what we said or did at the time of making the mistake. The writer feels thankful in being able to say, that he was honest and sincere in his belief at the time, and had he not, under the belief he then had, candidly expressed his belief, he is convinced he should not have received the benefit he has received, nor seen many things as clearly as he now does. Nor would he have had as much peace and satisfaction in his own mind as he now has—because he would not have acted sin-

cerely had he kept back his belief at the time. All has therefore worked for his good—while none that are truly seeking to be right, will be injured, but may receive benefit and instruction from his mistakes, by seeing the fallibility of man. Those only will stumble on his mistakes to their injury, who desire to stumble, and whom God in his wisdom and righteousness sees proper should have stumbling-blocks on which to stumble, according to their own desire.

The writer, therefore, has never felt mortified by seeing the mistakes he then made, or regretted having made them, and this he considers a great victory over the fallen nature, or old man, whose life principally consists in having a good name and standing in the world, and in receiving the approbation and applause, instead of the scorn and derision of men. He can even rejoice in what he then did, because it will have a tendency still more to prostrate the old man of his fallen nature, and because his lie, in respect to those things, will abound to God's glory, by leading people to look more to God instead of looking so much to man. He had always used great care and circumspection in what he wrote, and had generally been correct, and from this circumstance, had he not made those mistakes, some might have looked unto him as a standard to their injury. All indeed should rejoice when God is glorified and exalted, and man (so long as there is so much looking to man) is shorn of his honour, and debased, that there may be no longer an idolatrous looking unto men, as heretofore has been the case—for it ever has, and ever will have, a pernicious effect. Therefore, as saith the apostle; "Let God be true, but every man a liar;" and let it appear that every man is a liar, in order that each one may look unto God alone, and judge for himself according to the ability that God shall give. If, then, as the apostle speaks, "the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his

glory," by leading people to look more to God and less to man, the writer is satisfied, as he is abundantly compensated in his own mind for the mistakes he was permitted to make.

But take notice, we must not "do evil that good may come"—for this would be wicked in the sight of God, and would turn to us a curse, instead of a blessing. We must only do what we sincerely and conscientiously believe to be right, and express only what are honestly our views, and God will take care for all the rest. We shall then suffer no real loss, whatever odium may be cast on us on account of our mistakes; nor shall we have any just cause for regret in respect to our standing before God. Nor shall we sink in the esteem of any one, whose esteem is of any account. Our innocent mistakes may, indeed, be a stumbling-block to the wicked, who are always watching for stumbling-blocks as an excuse for continuing in their wickedness, and for rejecting whatever in reality is truth, but they will do no real harm to ourselves, or to those who are truly sincere, and seeking to do right—for the principal concern of such is to find substantial food, (and which they always can find,) and not to find stumbling-blocks on which they can stumble. The wicked can always find stumbling-blocks. Even the Lord of hosts himself, as will be seen, Isaiah viii. 15, while a sanctuary for his people to secure them against every thing that would harm them, will be for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence, for a gin and for a snare unto others that are not sincere; and, as we are told, "many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken"—because it is just with the Lord that it should be so. The Lord himself, indeed, in Ezekiel, speaks of laying a stumbling-block before some.

But here notice again, that all the stumbling-blocks in the world will never hurt the truly sincere. Strictly speaking we can never be hurt except



by ourselves, and hence those that are truly sincere cannot be hurt. Should they even stumble and "*fall seven times*," as the scriptures declare, God will "*raise them up again*." By cleaving unto the Lord, and seeking to do his will, we cannot suffer any harm; and if it be for the best, in the Red Sea, the swellings of Jordan, the lion's den, and in the fiery furnace, the Lord's arm will sustain us, and bring us safe through all. Therefore, let men trust in the Lord alone, and make him their fear, and their dread; and then, as it is said in the place already referred to in Isaiah, the Lord of hosts himself *will be unto them for a sanctuary*, and protect them at all times.

Observe, there will be truth enough proceed from those who are sincere in this day, should they err in some things, to leave the wicked without excuse.—And, indeed, since they would not receive the truth in their present state, were it ever so plain, and entirely free from any mixture of error, it is a mercy to them that there are stumbling-blocks, in connexion with the cause of truth, that thereby there may be some mitigation of their crime, and punishment, for their obstinate persistence in rejecting it. Their seeking, however, for stumbling-blocks, and for something on which they can stumble, is their sin, and evidences the great degree of wickedness that is in them; and by stumbling, they will be brought into trouble and suffering, till they are made willing to seek for something else besides stumbling-blocks on which they can stumble.

It seems to be the Lord's design, by the bridle causing people to err, as mentioned, Isaiah ii. 11—17, to *humble the lofty looks, and bow down the haughtiness of men, that the Lord alone may be exalted* in this day. For it is written; "Verily every man at his best estate [as a natural man] is altogether vanity, and walketh in a vain show." And again; "Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie; to be laid in the ba-

lance, they are altogether lighter than vanity." Yet this vain, light, and lying man would be something extraordinary in and of himself, and *his little member, the tongue*, as James speaks, *boasteth great things*. When the Immanuel grows up in men, and Christ does all that is done, then the state of man will be changed, and he will be no longer *vanity, and walk in a vain show*. For he will then know better than to ascribe any honour or glory to himself, but will give all the honour and glory to Christ, who does the works. Whatever works are not done by Christ, or in his nature and power, are works of sin.

But to conclude. Just before the Lord brings men into a right state, they will be more vain, erring, and conceited than they ever were before, inso-much, that the wisdom and way God will make use of for bringing men into a right state, will appear foolishness unto them, and seem exceedingly strange and injurious in every respect. Man would devise a very different way, and think, too, that his way would prove much more successful than the one the Lord will make use of. We have been told that when Christ comes to set up his kingdom, faith will hardly be found on the earth. And hence, when he begins his work for accomplishing it, and for bringing his people into the true "*rest, and the refreshing*" mentioned Isaiah, xxviii. 12, 13, men will "go, and fall backward,\* and

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\* Witness the following passage in Genesis, xlix. 17, 18, which, it is stated verse 1, shall take place "in the last days."—"Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel. Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse-heels, so that his rider shall fall backward. *I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord.*" We have all waited for the Lord's salvation; but the Lord's salvation does not come till this work of Dan takes place; and then, indeed, the Lord's salvation will come, when Dan, which means *judgment*, becomes as a serpent by the way men undertake to go in their own wills, an adder in the path they attempt

be broken, and snared, and taken."—Again, Isaiah, viii. 21, 22, it is said, "they shall pass through it, hardly bestead and hungry"—or, as signified in the original, *they shall miss or stumble upon the light of the morning of a better state of things, and be greatly distressed*; "and they shall look unto the earth: and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and they shall be driven to darkness." The

to walk to secure greatness and renown, biting the horse-heels of all their great stately schemes, so that they can no longer get along with them, but fall backward prostrate.

The word serpent, in Hebrew, means *searching* or *observing*, and Dan, which means *judgment*, will at this time be very searching and vigilant, so that "all the things of Esau will be searched out, and his hidden things sought up." At this very time of biting judgment and great distress, will Christ too be lifted up as a *brazen serpent* to the wicked, bitten by sin, and consequently by its judgment, in order to save them—and when their anguish and sufferings become very great, they will be glad to look to Christ for salvation, as much as they naturally dislike to do this. It is said, persons bitten by poisonous serpents, exceedingly dislike and wish to avoid the sight of burnished brass—yet they cannot dislike it more than wicked men now dislike looking to Christ. But seeing it is the only way whereby they can be saved, (as men will know ere long,) they will rejoice when all other means fail them, that such a provision for their salvation is provided.

It is on account of men's great wickedness in this day, that Christ becomes as a brazen serpent to them; and in their bitten state by sin, how much they dislike to look to him as he then appears to them. But as looking to him is the only remedy for saving them in their dreadful condition, sooner than die they will at length look to him, and every one that does this, tho' ever so badly bitten, will be saved.

Take notice, that the judgments now begun will go on, till all classes of men are brought into a state of the greatest suffering and distress, and in the end the most wicked will be made willing to look unto Christ, though at present, in consequence of their great wickedness, they may have less regard for Christ than the serpents of sin that bite them and cause them so much distress.

Lord's work never did nor never will suit wicked men, but it will always distress and torment them; and they will reject it, and fight against it till the Lord's judgments cast them down and humble them. Those that shall fall on Christ, "the stone of Israel," will indeed be broken, and sorrow for all they have done amiss; but those on whom it shall fall, will have much more severe sufferings—for it is said, it will grind them to powder. So that it will be well for all to take hold of the Lord's strength, that they may make peace with him, and then it is said they shall make peace with him. See Isaiah, xxvii. 5.

#### PUNISHMENT OF CRIME IN THEORY AND CRIME IN ACT.

Whoever will make themselves acquainted with history will find, that till within a few centuries, well meaning and good intentioned persons, both among Protestants and Catholics, honestly believed that it was right and necessary to punish men for erroneous sentiments in matters of religion. They did not think themselves justified to leave it to the Lord to support his own truth. To allow persons to think as they judged proper, they believed would prove the destruction of all true religion, and be ruinous to society, and they deemed it absolutely necessary, and a duty, to punish by pains and penalties the errors and aberrations of men from a correct standard or system of faith. This was done to prevent the spread of pernicious sentiments and preserve the cause of righteousness and the well-being of society from the harm, injury, and ruin that they supposed would otherwise ensue. So they believed, and acted in accordance with such a belief. It is now determined, and very justly determined they were in error; but they were not in greater error than men are in this day in respect to another subject in close alliance or connexion with belief. We mean the infliction of punishment



on men for aberrations in conduct. For mankind do not yet perceive that all deviation from moral rectitude and conduct stand precisely on the same footing as errors in belief, and that there is just as much inconsistency in inflicting pains and penalties in the one case as in the other.

The person who follows a wrong course of conduct, has a more severe punishment, and suffers more in his mind, than one who departs from a right belief; and he has greater and stronger motives to return to a correct course of conduct, without the infliction of any outward pains or penalties, than one has to forsake a wrong belief. The advantages which a right course of conduct brings, and the satisfaction it ensures, are much greater than they are in respect to men's belief. But the reasoning is, that men that do wrong must be punished, as was the reasoning once in respect to belief, and erring man takes upon himself the responsible task of helping the Almighty to restrain and govern his creatures, by inflicting punishment on them for what he deems amiss. The time will come, when no one will think of doing such a thing, but will leave the business of punishing men wholly to the Lord, who only can know the demerit of men's actions under all the circumstances they are placed, and who is not in want of the power or the means to render to every one according to his works by his own arm, without the interposition or aid of any man or set of men. And, indeed, right in theory, and right in actions are so much alike, and are so interwoven and assimilated with each other, that they cannot well be separated. One almost necessarily follows the other, as clouds follow the course of the wind, or as heat accompanies the fire—and till lately, (and in some instances in this day,) what is pernicious and false in belief, has been considered blasphemy, wicked, and criminal, and has been punished as such—thus placing wrong in theory and wrong in practice on the

same footing, and equally deserving the infliction of pains and penalties.

And who assumes this high and responsible business of setting in judgment and exercising dominion and authority over his fellow men? Sinners and wicked men only, who will themselves have to render an account for the right they exercise in doing it, as well as for the manner in which it is done. But, says one; What would become of us, and how could we be safe if we were not to punish wicked men? Where is such a person's faith, trust, or dependance in God? In reality he has none, and he is no better than an atheist, whatever he may think to the contrary—for he practically denies the existence of such a God as the scriptures describe and declare. If any one is afraid to trust himself and his all solely to the hands of the Lord, without having resort to the punishment of his fellow men, his faith and trust in God are of no worth. For what are their use? He either thinks God is unjust, and that he must redress himself or not have justice done to him—that God is not able to do him justice—or else that there is no God. One of these three things must needs be the case, in every instance where a man resorts to the infliction of punishment on his fellow man.

It is now pretty generally admitted, at least in this country, that it is not right to punish men on account of what they believe. It is thought that there are guards of protection and support sufficient on the side of truth, in and of itself, and from its own intrinsic excellency and advantage to men, to maintain and protect itself, without the infliction of any secular penalties or sufferings for not following and adhering to it. Therefore men are left to believe whatever they please, (as shocking as such a state of things would have once appeared,) being amenable only unto God for their belief—and no punishment is inflicted on men by reason of their belief, save such as a faithful witness or testimony against what

is erroneous and wrong in belief may produce. And yet men do not now cry out against such a state of things, nor dread its consequences as in a more dark condition of people's minds would most certainly have been the case.

And what is there to prevent the same effects arising from the same causes in respect to men's actions as their belief? Surely the guards for promoting and securing virtuous actions, and for restraining men from what is wrong, are much more strong and powerful than those in respect to men's belief, and are calculated to be equally efficient, without the infliction of any corporeal or secular punishments on men when they swerve from rectitude of action and conduct. Still, mankind it seems are not yet prepared to rely on them, but must undertake to avenge themselves. While men are destitute of such a faith, and trust in the efficacy of those guards of protection and support which the Lord has provided, and will provide for securing right conduct, they are never likely to see the benefit that would arise from them—and by practising a work of cruelty on their fellow men, they perpetuate its existence, familiarize the minds of men to its use, and thus obstruct the operation of better, and what we have no doubt would prove more salutary and effectual principles for bringing about a right state of things. Let God punish, and let man be slow to take vengeance and punish his fellow man—for he must give an account himself before God, and He that will not lie, has said, *with the same measure we mete to others, it shall be measured to us again.*

None can deny but that the guards provided in every man's heart, and in the feelings of society generally, for securing right conduct and for restraining men from what is wrong, are much more strong than those in respect to what men believe. Why, then, should they not at least be equally efficacious, and be equally relied on, without having resort to harsh and violent means for aid? Almost every one, and par-

ticularly every good man, naturally seeks to avoid, shun, and have but little intimacy or dealings with a wicked and an injurious man, and he never sees any true comfort or happiness. Is not the punishment then already inflicted on such persons, like that inflicted on Cain, sufficiently great, without men, and sinful, erring, and accountable men, taking it on themselves by a systematized plan of law to make it still greater? Who but God can justly claim the right to punish men, since he alone can know the true demerits of men's actions? And is not God able to inflict punishment and restrain his creatures, without the intervention or aid of man, and a sinner, like the one he punishes? And if he be able, is it not better to leave it to his own time, and his own way to do this, instead of taking it upon ourselves to do the Lord's work in our time, and in our way?—Those who take judgment into their own hands, and undertake to execute vengeance by punishing their fellow men, with a view to protect themselves or secure the well-being of society, can have no belief in a God, or else have no confidence and trust in him.

These remarks are not so much made for the sake of the wicked and profane, as for those that profess a belief in the New Testament, and claim to be the followers of Christ. And of these we would ask; Where is your right or authority, or where is there any warrant in the New Testament, for inflicting penalties and punishments on even the worst of men? Is it not an absolute renunciation and abandonment of the principles Christ laid down?—Every true Christian will assuredly leave every thing in the way of punishing his fellow men wholly in the hands of God, who can only rightly judge and punish, and who is abundantly able effectually to protect and deliver in all cases, and under all circumstances, those who put their trust in him—and who will also do this, as far as it is best it should be done—and to wish to be protected and delivered further than



this, shows great folly as well as selfishness, and betrays the want of resignation and Christian principle.

From what is now practised in society, it is plain, that very few in this day have any real trust or dependance in God, and that, practically, most men are complete atheists—having no belief at all in such a God as the scriptures declare to exist. For if they believed in such a God, they must needs believe that he is all powerful; that he is every where present; that nothing escapes his notice,—yea, that not even a sparrow falleth to the ground without the providential oversight and supervision of the Almighty. Who that believes in such a God, can want any other trust or dependance? For the writer's own part, he hopes he may never live to see the day when he shall wish any other protection or support against the worst of men, and all their power to harm or injure him, than the Lord himself will grant, without any resort to human laws or penalties to protect and save him.

It is enjoined in the New Testament, and hence is a duty, for a man to rule and govern in his own family. Beyond this, there is no warrant in the New Testament for exercising authority and rule over men, much less to punish them. And to assume such power and authority, is to usurp the prerogative of God, and take ourselves from under his protection—which, ere long, will be found to be the only safe and sure protection that men will have. For all temporal government and authority, will soon be broken and destroyed, to make room for that government and authority which are from God, and which will never be broken or set aside, but stand for ever. The governments and kingdoms now in the world, may fortify and strengthen themselves as much as they think proper against that authority which is from God, yet the Lord's power will prevail over all their strength and dominion, and his name will be glorified in their downfall and dissolution. We know, indeed, from

the sure word of prophecy, that the time draws near when that government which is from God will be the only government over all the earth, and those who are its subjects will never inflict cruel penalties and sufferings, such as are now done, on any, but will leave every thing in the way of punishment to Him who cannot err, and who will exercise no injustice or cruelty towards any of the creatures whom he has made.

### BINDING IN BUNDLES.

“Let both grow together until the harvest; and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.” *Matt. xiii. 30.*

This work of gathering and binding in bundles, has been going on for some time. To be convinced of this, we have only to direct our attention to the numerous parties, unions, and combinations lately formed, and still in existence. There is a hand employed in these things which men cannot see, but which they cannot resist. The effects of the binding are discoverable in the difficulty which exists at this time, to make people see differently from what they do, however wrong they may be—to turn them from any pursuit in which they are engaged—or to change their views or course in the least, by any arguments or reasonings that can be used. All this serves to show, that there is a strong binding influence in the case, such as we have not heretofore been accustomed to see. The writer has lately become so fully convinced of this, that when he once finds a person fixed in any particular views, or course of pursuit, he never attempts to enter into any argument or reasoning with him—well knowing that it would be wholly useless, and without the least effect. Formerly, in such a case, it might have been very proper and a duty to do so; but at present he is convinced that it is not. The Lord has designs in permitting these things

that will more fully appear hereafter. It may, however, be observed that a principal design is, that each one may receive according to his works—for each party or combination embraces a particular class or character of men, and in these parties and combinations they are destined, in the proper time, to pass under a burning ordeal of trouble and suffering, when such parties and combinations will cease, and be no more.

In confirmation of what has been stated, we will refer to one description of men, and the strong bands by which they are bound. There are many in this day, who really believe that there is no God, and others, that believe the Bible and all revelation are false. Now, who, by any course of reasoning, or argument, can change the views or opinions of one such person? If any think they can do this, they have only to make the attempt, to convince them of their mistake. Now, believing as they do at present, they may not be able to help. The cause lies deeper, and more remote—and the more important inquiry for themselves, and all who would not wish to come into similar errors, is, how they came to be left to fall into such errors? Pride of opinion and self-conceit, are a pretty sure presage to all kinds of error. But whatever may be the cause of their present views, one thing is certain, that all those who entertain such views, (not at first but after a time,) will have to undergo great trouble, suffering and anguish. They can never see any true happiness in a disbelief of the truth, and briars and thorns will beset their path more and more, till they return with sorrow and regret to Him from whom they have strayed and wandered, as into a dreary and howling wilderness, where there is neither water to refresh, nor food to satisfy a mind that must ever crave comfort and happiness. In this cheerless and uncomfortable state they will have to be left, (since nothing can be done for them at present,) till they find by painful ex-

perience, that there is but "*one source of happiness for all mankind—THE FAVOUR OF GOD*"—and that his favour can be secured, only by seeking to do his will.

But to conclude, in reference to the numerous parties, combinations, and unions now existing, and which as has been shown, may be very fitly represented as men bound in bundles.—There is but one UNION that is of any worth, and that can alone exempt men from trouble and unhappiness, and that is, a *union with God*, in truth, righteousness and filial obedience; and where this union fully takes place in any one, it will break the individual off from every other union, party, or combination, that is now in the world. For they are all founded in the selfish will and wisdom of man, draw away the mind from God, and are all destined, before long, to pass under the burning operation of trouble, suffering, and anguish, and then to cease. It will be well if from their ashes, as in the case of the burning of the *red heifer*, something of a useful and beneficial nature shall be produced.

#### ON JUDGING.

"*Judge nothing before the time.*" 1 Cor. iv. 5.

How little capable are men of judging correctly respecting any one. So difficult did the apostle see it to be, to determine any thing with certainty in the case, that we hear him say in respect to judging; "*Yea, I judge not mine own self.*" For though he tells us he was not conscious of doing any thing wrong, or of omitting faithfully to perform his duty, yet he makes this no certain criterion to determine that he was without fault, adding—"he that judgeth me is the Lord." He could know more about himself than any other person could know concerning him, and hence could better judge himself; and yet he allows he might judge erroneously even in respect to himself.

The measure of grace, ability, and assistance, given to each individual, with various circumstances which can be known only unto God, render it still more difficult for one man to judge and determine concerning another—because, for these bestowments each will have to render an



account. And if a person has been faithful to what he received, and has done the best he was capable of doing under the circumstances he was placed, though he may have come far short, in appearance, to many others that received greater gifts, and were placed in more favourable circumstances, yet he will receive greater tokens of divine approbation than such as had much more given them, and were much more favoured, but were not equally faithful to the talents and gifts bestowed. "Therefore," very justly says the apostle, "judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart." Things now dark and unapproachable by man, with the motives and intentions by which men have been governed, as well as the measure of faithfulness each has exerted in the sphere assigned him, will then be all fully revealed and disclosed—and then, and then only, can praise and blame, approval and censure, be properly and justly rendered or bestowed. Well may the apostle say to the Corinthians under all these circumstances; "With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment."

Christ tells us; "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much"—because, the degree of faithfulness to what has been received, not the amount or the abundance received, is that which is taken into account with the Lord, and determines all in fixing the decision that will be passed upon each individual. Who therefore is qualified to judge except so far as knowledge is imparted unto one from Him who knows all things? Two mites, rightly used and devoted to the Lord in true honesty and simplicity of heart, when it is all a person has, is more in point of acceptance before God, and will more redound to the person's benefit, than the most abundant gifts, graces, and endowments, used and devoted to the Lord with a less degree of integrity and singleness of heart. Even a cup of cold water, given to a follower of Christ with simplicity of intention and purity of affection, to contribute to his comfort and refreshment because he belongs to Christ and his cause, we learn, is not unnoticed, and the giver, Christ has said, "shall in no wise lose his reward." All persons, therefore, are on an equality, and possess equal advantages for securing the favour of Him who looketh on the heart, and who estimates the *value of an action by the spi-*

*rit in which it is done, and the condition of the person who renders it.* Whatever a person has been, the instant he gives his whole heart to the Lord, to devote himself to do his will, that instant the Lord will accept him, take him under his protection, and order every event for his good. Why, then, will any die when the condition of salvation is made so easy to all?

#### WORTHY OF ATTENTION.

The worst case for a man to be in, is to fight for the Lord in the spirit of the devil, and to be zealous for righteousness in the principles of unrighteousness. It is the same thing as to be hung on one of the devil's righteous hooks, which are the very worst hooks that men can be hung on, because it is so difficult ever to get released from them. For the individual being earnest and zealous for what he considers right, is easily made to think he is right, and his eyes are blinded to his true condition—not knowing, and perhaps not caring to know, that the principles by which, and the spirit in which he acts, determines every thing in the sight of God, and not the cause or object which engages his attention.

This kind of serving God and the cause of righteousness, is a pit and a calamity into which the Lord in righteousness generally permits the wicked and insincere to fall, to their very great injury, if not to their final undoing, as in the case of the great body of the Jews in Christ's time. Paul was rescued out of this unhappy condition, because, though actuated by a bitter spirit in what he did, he was truly sincere. He himself tells us, he obtained mercy, because he did it ignorantly in unbelief, verily thinking with himself that he ought to do as he did.

How many in this day, in standing up for old forms and usages, under a supposition that they are founded in right and are to continue for ever, contend for them with a bitter animosity, and like the Jews, would extirpate such as witness against them, and by an honest testimony show their unprofitableness, emptiness and injurious tendency. We would that they were all honest and sincere in what they do, as was Saul of Tarsus; because, they might then obtain mercy, and be brought to a sense of their true state and condition.

To be bitter and implacable against the worst of men, and zealous for punishing them, shows a man to be a very great sinner, and to be more like a devil than a Christian, while he may attempt to persuade himself that he is doing God ser-

vice, and promoting the cause of justice. God ere long will remove this false covering from before men's eyes, and those who have exercised cruelty, will see the turpitude of their hearts, and tremble under a sense of their guilt and criminality. Every thing must be done from a spirit of love, or we shall be cursed in our deed, whatever it may be. And, although under a spirit of love, we may, like Christ, have to be severe in our rebukes of what is wrong; yet there will never be a disposition in us to hurt a hair of any one's head; but all will be done solely for the person's good, and with a view to his best interest.

In the times which are now arising, we cannot too carefully consider these things. For the devil is about to have a long chain, and great power to deceive, in order to try men, and to bring out and call into action every thing that is in them. The devil well knows how to do this, and he can sift and try the heart, and detect every particle of dust or deficiency that exists in it. Witness the case of Job. Let all therefore look unto the Lord, that they may be preserved from all wrong, under the wiles, stratagems, and deceivings that will be exercised towards them. We have seen too many already, like Peter, come short in the trials under which they have been brought, which must cause sorrow and grief as it did to Peter. Yet take notice, Peter was actuated with no bad motive or bitter intentions towards any one in what he did. It was the great pressure of fear and dread that was on him at the time, that overcame him, and caused him to swerve. Christ, therefore, scarcely gave him a rebuke, though he felt deeply himself. It will be well if many who now think themselves firm, and almost invulnerable, do not do much worse than Peter in the times that are coming to try every man. For the fiery trial that is at hand, and that has already come to some, will not only try every man's work, but the man himself—and the sort of work, and the sort of man that did the work, will be fully ascertained under the searching and burning ordeal. Well may the apostle say, as in 1 Cor. iv. 5, that those who stand this trial, "shall have praise of God." There will be no boasting among any that have passed under this trial. Above all things, let every one beware of indulging a bad spirit towards any one. The indulgence of such a spirit will turn to one's destruction—and the assaults of the adversary to call it into action, through his agents and falsifications to the mind, will be exceedingly great.—

We are required to love our enemies—and let every one *take heed to his spirit*, lest he suffer great loss or come under condemnation.

#### TO SUBSCRIBERS.

We have issued this number earlier than usual, because, in the first place, it suited the printer to proceed with it, and in the second, we wished by a timely notice, to give to those living in states where small notes are about to go out of circulation, an opportunity to make remittances before it would be more inconvenient for them to do so. We have been losing by the publication for some time past, by reason of a neglect on the part of subscribers to remit what is due—and as small notes in several more of the states are about to go out of circulation, and the prospect of remittances will become less, we shall have to stop sending, after this number, to nearly all whose numbers are forwarded by mail, except to such as have paid in advance and continue to do so.—We shall then know who do, and who do not, feel an interest in the work. We have reason to suppose, that many to whom we have long been sending the numbers, feel little interest in the subjects now treated of. To us they are otherwise, because, we know the foundation upon which they rest, and the time will come when the veil that is now before the eyes of men will be removed. We feel that we are now clear from the blood of those to whom we have long been sending the numbers without any pay—for we have borne witness to what we know to be the truth, though in respect to some of the prophecies we were in error. When the day of trial comes to each one that reads these lines, he will remember and know the truth of many things we have stated—for we have done it honestly as unto the Lord, and for the good of men. We leave it to each one's own conscience to settle up what is due or not, as we do not wish any more to press our claim. If any wish the numbers longer, they can send us word. The Lord is beginning a new and strange work in the earth, and he will carry it on—and it becomes every one, in this day of the Lord's strange work, to examine well his condition, and to inquire what he is to do.

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